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DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AF/SE NATSIOS
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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST: ARAB DONORS CONFERENCE ON DARFUR

¶1. (SBU) Note: This cable contains an action request. Please see para 4. End note. The Arab League, the government of Sudan and other regional entities are planning an Arab donors conference on Darfur to be held October 30-31 in Khartoum. Foreign Minister Lam Akol and presidential advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail are the primary sponsors on the Sudanese side, and Saudi Arabia is scheduled to co-preside. In a preparatory committee meeting hosted by the Sudanese MFA in Khartoum on October 6, organizers advised Sudanese ambassadors in Arab states to publicize the event through news conferences and other media. Most Arab countries are expected to send representatives, as well as the Sudanese Red Crescent and local NGOs and civil society groups.

¶2. (SBU) According to Hassan Bargo, one of the conference organizers and an NCP leader, the conference is intended to promote a political settlement in Darfur as well as provide humanitarian assistance. ICC indictee and State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs Ahmed Haroun has stated that the conference will encourage "resettlement" in Darfur, claiming in a briefing with the Sudanese Council for Voluntary Associations (SCOVA) that Darfur is seeing large numbers of voluntary repatriations.

¶3. (SBU) Abdul Aziz Sam, director of legal administration in the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA), has sharply criticized the conference, saying that any donor activities must be coordinated through the TDRA. In a press conference held over the weekend, Mr. Sam said that in May 2006 Minni Minawi, chairperson of the TDRA, and Arab League Secretary General Amr Mousa had agreed to hold an Arab donors conference for humanitarian operations in Darfur, and that the NCP was now trying to hijack the process. He feared that any pledges would go "into the mouths of crocodiles" and not to the people of Darfur.

¶4. (SBU) Action request: Post requests that AF coordinate with counterparts in NEA to demarche host governments in Arab States and make the following points:

-- The U.S. welcomes greater Arab participation in resolving the conflict in Darfur.

-- The U.S. is not opposed to Arab states sending representatives to the conference, but cautions them to avoid endorsing a purely government of Sudan "reconstruction" process that formalizes facts on the ground, such as ethnic cleansing and land expulsions, at the expense of Darfur's refugees and IDPs.

-- The U.S. will be closely monitoring the conference, looking at the amounts of money pledged and the projects and undertakings to which money is directed.

-- We believe that the TDRA, or even better, multi-lateral agencies of the UN are more responsible and transparent vehicles for the solidarity of Arab governments with Darfur.